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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ISLAMABAD 012740

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SUBJECT: PAKISTANI OFFICIALS, JOURNALISTS DISCUSS
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE TRIBAL AREAS WITH VISITING S/CT
DELEGATION

REF: ISLAMABAD 12406

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY: DERIVED FROM DSCG 05-01, B, D

¶1. (c) Summary: Visiting S/CT DAS Virginia Palmer, Chief S/CT Strategist David Kilcullen and SCA DAS John Gastright met June 22-24 in Islamabad and Peshawar with a range of officials and journalists to review developments in Pakistan's troubled tribal region. All interlocutors, whether civilian or military, in government or in the media agreed that (1) a multitiered strategy -- addressing security, political and development needs -- was essential; (2) that of these three areas, political and development initiatives should take priority; (3) that stabilizing the area would require strengthening, for the time being, traditional tribal and administrative structures, not replacing them and (4) that in this context the key need was to establish clear lines of authority, running from the tribes through the maliks and political agents and ultimately to the NWFP Governor. While there was broad consensus on the nature of the challenge and how to address it, there was less evidence of coordination among the government agencies involved. The delegation's meeting with Minister of Interior Sherpao is reported reftel. This is a joint Consulate Peshawar- Embassy Islamabad cable. End Summary.

Sahibzada Imtiaz, Advisor to the Prime Minister on FATA

¶2. (c) Sahibzada Imtiaz, who had taken the lead in developing the Government's overall political strategy for the FATA, made it clear that having developed the plan, he was very much in the back seat when it came to implementation. NWFP Governor Orakzai was the focal point for implementation, he said, not only for development and political matters but also on security strategy -- though tactics would be left to the army. Imtiaz blamed the instability in the FATA largely on a weakening over time of the traditional lines of authority; it was important that clear lines be reestablished. The Governor should be the focal point with an empowered cadre of Political Agents reporting directly to him. The Governor should also be the focal point for the planned tribal jirgas, which could only succeed if they were inclusive and representative of tribal interests and figures.

¶3. (c) Imtiaz stressed that the key on the economic side was to take account of the region's natural and human

resources. The region had resources, he said, especially mineral resources, but it was essential to create an enabling environment for private sector investment. He expected U.S.-sponsored Reconstruction Opportunity Zones (ROZs) could catalyze additional investment. Imtiaz anticipated that the Government would issue a development masterplan, targeting key sectors that needed additional investment. The new FATA Development Authority would take the lead.

BG Nasser and DGMO Pasha

14. (c) Brig. General Nasser (Director of Military Operations for the Pakistan Army) briefed the delegation on developments in the FATA, surveying recent history, insurgent strategies and the Pakistan Army's evolving response. The army was now moving away from cordon and search operations, he explained, and was using "snap" operations -- smaller lighter units that could be deployed against targets and withdrawn quickly. The army was using night operations more, and was focusing heavily on improved training.

15. (c) Nasser frankly admitted that the obstacles were daunting. The physical terrain was challenging and the local population included refugees, religious leaders and deeply suspicious tribesmen. The popularity of the Pakistan military had declined at the national level, and the relationship with the local population in the Tribal Areas was "in the minus" due in part to collateral damage from Pakistani attacks. A villager's new road was more than offset by the new grave for his brother, Nasser

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observed. Moreover, military checkpoints were demeaning to a proud people. It was time to pay more attention to political solutions and economic development, and rely less on the military he concluded. In particular, it was important that any political process include local tribal leaders and give them a sense of ownership.

16. (c) Nasser bridled at suggestions that Pakistan was not doing enough in the war on terror, pointing to the number of casualties suffered by the army and underscoring that Pakistan understood its political and economic interests in a stable Afghanistan: "When you say we are not doing enough," we say "go to hell." In a follow-on session, Director General of Military Operations MG Ahmed Shujat Pasha, picked up on this theme, observing that critical comments of U.S. officials, as picked up by the Afghan press, had been extremely hurtful. While he understood that the comments had been taken out of context, nonetheless they had fed perceptions that the U.S.-Pakistan relationship was strained.

Peshawar Journalists

17. (c) In a wide-ranging conversation, the bureau chiefs of The Nation, Mashriq, NNI, Dawn, and Express, opined that the only areas in the FATA that were problematic were those that bordered trouble spots in Afghanistan. Khyber, Mohmand, Orakzai and Kurram Agencies were relatively peaceful, though the last suffered from sectarian violence. Bajaur Agency was a potential trouble spot.

18. (c) They maintained the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the religious, six-party coalition that governs the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), had downplayed the Talibanization of North and South Waziristan, and it's spillover effect into the settled areas. Unless the Pak-Afghan border were completely sealed, problems would continue and possibly spread. The troubles in these agencies had been exacerbated by a shift in power to the "mosque." Historically, religious leaders ("mullahs")

played a secondary role to traditional tribal leaders ("maliks"), but after the commencement of the Soviet-Afghan war, a power shift began that had continued for the last twenty-five years, with the religious leaders ascending over the maliks. According to the journalists, for the region to be stable, the traditional leaders must be re-empowered.

Khyber Political Agent Tashfeen Khan

¶9. (c) Khyber Political Agent (PA) Tashfeen Khan, who previously served as the Development Secretary at the FATA Secretariat, conceded the political administration had

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"broken down" in North and South Waziristan, but asserted the civil governance of other agencies continued to work well. Khan identified development as the immediate problem in the FATA and he recommended concentrating on three areas: 1) developing the resource potential of the mineral industry; 2) agriculture development which would require consolidation of land, flood protection, and water resource management; and 3) developing human resources, since 40-50% of the FATA population is under the age of twenty. Khan conceded the GOP lacked the expertise to implement new ideas and was not capable of industrializing the FATA. He stressed the need for GOP capacity building measures and stated that once the U.S. demonstrated its commitment to FATA development, other stakeholders would show similar resolve. Khan also emphasized the development of trade linkages with Afghanistan, claiming there were seven better Pak-Afghan trade routes than the Khyber Pass.

¶10. (c) Khan asserted that Governor Orakzai's plan to convene a loya jirga (grand council of elders) to address the Waziristan security situation was likely to be far more successful than Pakistani Army operations. In general, the Frontier Corps should be used in the FATA when military action was required. Like the journalists, Khan advocated strengthening the maliks and lowering the status of the mullahs. The latter had increased their power due to the Afghan war, failure of the GOP to respond properly to FATA

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issues, and the imposition of adult franchise in the region. The push for devolution, local governance, and the creation of the All Agency FATA Councilors Alliance had created parallel power structures that diluted the power of the maliks. "You can't impose a new system without understanding the old system. If you want to change it, wipe out the old but you can't have half and half. You have to strengthen the old and then gradually, over time, move forward with step-by-step changes," said Khan. After greater development in the region, the people "will decide for themselves what changes they want, we shouldn't impose our views on them."

¶11. (c) Khan also agreed with a suggestion that the Political Agents be given more training, possibly at western universities. He conceded the quality of PAs had decreased over time, but blamed it on constant experimentation within the Pakistani civil service. The best and brightest Pakistanis no longer sought jobs in the civil bureaucracy, but instead took more lucrative jobs in finance or with international NGOs. The prospect of western training would add prestige to the position and help the government attract better political agents. In addition to training, Khan stressed that the authority of the PA needed to be restored, including command over the civil authority, development projects, and having operational control of the Frontier Corps.

FATA Secretariat Chief Secretary Arbab Shahzad

¶12. (c) FATA Secretariat Chief Secretary Arbab Shahzad maintained that his organization would be strengthened in the coming months based on the plan put forward by Sahibzada Imtiaz. However, admitted that Minister of Industries and Special Initiatives Jehangir Tareen's economic development proposal had not yet been discussed with the FATA Secretariat. The agency had not had any deliberations with the federal government regarding Tareen's plan and Shahzad was unaware of any implementation schedule for the proposal.

¶13. (c) Shahzad hoped that the FATA Development Agency (FATA DA) would be in place within six weeks, once approved by the Governor and President Musharraf. An autonomous agency, the FATA DA would be responsible for implementing all development projects in the tribal region, focusing on skill development, mineral and industrial development (including Reconstruction Opportunity Zones), and the creation of rural support programs. SAFRON would no longer be the principal accounting officer for FATA expenditures, but an Additional Chief Secretary in the Governor's office would assume that role. Echoing Sahibzada Imtiaz, Shazad welcomed this change as a necessary corrective to previously diffuse authority structures.

¶14. (c) Shahzad shared the Khyber PA's views that the Waziristan security situation required strengthening the political administration, and re-establishing the credibility of the political agents. The tribals had lost confidence in the current political administration and it would take years to rebuild it.

Inspector General of the Frontier Corps Major General Alam Khattak

¶15. (c) Inspector General of the Frontier Corps (FC), Major General Alam Khattak, reviewed the status of his 36,000 force, noting they man 600 posts and guard a 1200 kilometer border. In the north, the FC was on "high vigilance alert" and has had some problems in Bajaur. Khattak expressed his gratitude for the assistance from the U.S. forces in Kunar, on the Afghan side. In Kurram Agency, the problems were primarily sectarian in nature, occasionally resulting in violence.

¶16. (c) Khattak sought to counter the common perception that Pakistani security forces were losing the battle in North and South Waziristan. To the contrary, because of the military operations in South Waziristan over the last few years, there was now a measure of control and greater

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stability in the agency. In North Waziristan, Khattak stated, the FC had just completed a high operational cycle that he deemed "successful." He conceded that North Waziristan was still violent, but the militants were increasingly frustrated as demonstrated by the evolution of their tactics. Originally they attacked FC pickets, then used ambushes, switched to IEDs and now were using suicide bombers. The militants had lost key commanders, lacked money and ammunition, and their morale was suffering. With the militants on the run, Khattak stressed the need to revive "the political process." The political administration must be restored, reducing the influence of the mullahs, and a comprehensive development strategy introduced.

¶17. (u) Visiting S/CT del did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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